



Office of Public Outreach and Communications

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Leonard R. Flynn & Alvarado Elementary Two-Way Spanish Immersion Re-Assignment

OPTIONS FOR RE-ASSIGNED FAMILIES

SFUSD deeply regrets having to make the decision to re-assign families and realizes that doing so, only a month before the school year starts, causes tremendous strain for those affected.

Below are the most up-to-date options the district is offering to the 23 re-assigned families.

- **List up to 10 schools, including SFUSD's most highly-requested schools, and be assigned to one through random lottery.** In order to give re-assigned families more choices, the district has decided to accommodate students from re-assigned families at some of the most-requested SFUSD elementary schools. Families will be given a list of schools with the number of openings at each site and can identify up to 10 school choices in rank order. Then, SFUSD will select families to take these spaces based on a random lottery (no diversity factors will be used).
- **Spanish Immersion Program at Daniel Webster Elementary.** All families who want to remain in a Spanish Immersion Program can select placement in the new Spanish Dual Immersion Program at Webster. The new Program can accommodate all families. However, there is a minimum number of families who must choose this option. In order for this new program to open up next year, 10 of the reassigned families must choose it. If fewer than 10 families choose this option, their second choice will be considered their first choice during the random lottery.
- **All families who had been assigned Flynn's Spanish Immersion program can choose to stay at Flynn in the General Education program.** These families will simply need to identify Flynn's General Education Program as their first choice. Due to space constraints, the same offer cannot be made to Alvarado families; however, Alvarado families will be given priority to any openings in the Alvarado GE program.
- **As with all families, re-assigned families can go into the wait pool for any school or program. Re-assigned families will get first priority to be admitted from a wait pool should a space become available at any time.**



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Frequently Asked Questions

What happened?

The technical process in preparing files for the Student Assignment run involves hundreds of checks and verifications. Younger siblings and inclusion students have priority into the school and are pre-assigned prior to the files going to the consultant for the actual assignment run. In the case of Two-Way Immersion Programs, the students are to be assigned and a language code attached to them in order to accurately count toward the language capacity.

Due to a programming error where the wrong language codes were entered to pre-assigned kindergarten siblings of already enrolled students, the assignment of students into the two-way Spanish Immersion Programs at Flynn and Alvarado Elementary schools yielded an imbalance of English dominant and native Spanish speaking students, a program that is designed to have a balance of 50% English Speakers and 50% Spanish Speakers.

How did SFUSD learn about the error?

The Alvarado & Flynn school principals noticed an imbalance of English and Spanish speakers within the Spanish Immersion classrooms when they were creating the class lists for fall 2008 at the end of this past school year.

At first, the district audit yielded that there was a balance of English and Spanish speaking students assigned to these schools. Upon further investigation, the district discovered that there had been a coding error, which is why the program looked balanced. A programmatic misstep in the process occurred when pre-registered students did not receive appropriate language coding.

Due to this error, the district also found that several Spanish-speaking students that were assigned to General Education programs had requested the Immersion Program as a higher choice on their enrollment.

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Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

How does the assignment process work for Two-Way Immersion Programs?

Prior to Round 1, the capacity of the Immersion Program classrooms is divided in half to obtain the requested 50/50 program model. Once capacity is established, technical pre-assignment of siblings can occur. Then all other applications are entered and the final file is sent to a consultant for the student assignment run. After the run, the Educational Placement Center (EPC) reviews capacity reports, class lists, and student assignment run data, to assure an appropriate 50/50 mix of languages assigned.

What did the district do once it realized the coding error?

As a result of this error, the district was faced with tough choices. Officials decided that it was best to assure access to the non-English speaking families who were not given their higher choice due to the coding error, and to uphold the integrity of the Two-Way Immersion model, by re-assigning some of the English speaking families.

Several different options were considered and discussed at length with district staff, including teachers and principals at Flynn and Alvarado. One staff member called native English speaking families affected by the error to inform of the imbalances and asked these families if they would consider a re-assignment to the general education class at the same site. Through multiple phone calls, all families who were reached indicated that they preferred to remain assigned to Two-Way Immersion even though there was an imbalance of English Home Language Speakers.

The main options that were discussed included:

- 1) *Create a "bubble class."* This option was seriously considered but numerous factors (facilities, capacity, program implementation and quality issues) were major barriers.
- 2) *Add a team teacher to each Immersion class and expand enrollment.* Numerous factors (physical classroom size, capacity, program implementation and quality issues) were reasons why this option was eliminated.
- 3) *Change the program from a Two-Way Immersion class to a Total Immersion class.* This option would have been unfair to the Spanish speaking families who requested the program because Total Immersion is designed for non-native speakers whereas two-way Immersion is designed to include both native and non-native speakers.
- 4) *Create a new Dual-Immersion Program at a nearby location that can accommodate space and programming needs.* This is one of the options currently being pursued.

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Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

How were the re-assigned English speaking families selected?

The English speaking families who were re-assigned from the Spanish Immersion classes at Flynn and Alvarado were chosen at random using a computer.

What actions are being taken to assure that this error doesn't happen again?

In order to prevent a recurrence of this situation, EPC will need to install an additional mechanism to ensure that the appropriate language code is attached to all pre-assigned students, which will be double checked by a second programmer, along with checking the balance of languages after completion of the lottery run by both the consultants and the programming and management teams within EPC and IT. Schools will also be asked to immediately review assignment lists in March and notify EPC if they find any discrepancies.

How are the re-assigned families being notified?

Families were notified by phone and by mail on July 24. Personal phone calls were made to families at the same time that letters were being sent home. Families were invited to call and or meet in person with an enrollment counselor. SFUSD will host an informational meeting about the Daniel Webster Elementary Two-Way Immersion Program and answer additional questions from families on Tuesday, July 29, 2008 at Daniel Webster.

How are the native Spanish-speaking families being notified that they can now accept an assignment in the two-way Immersion program?

Spanish-speaking families who listed the Immersion Programs at Flynn and Alvarado as their first choice, but who were assigned to GE programs, are being contacted to offer them spaces in the Immersion Programs at Flynn, Alvarado and Webster. They have also been invited to the meeting at Daniel Webster on July 29.